



# States of play

The US's lesser-known states offer a taste of the real America for return visitors, discovers David Whitley

The US has some staple destinations that have long proved popular with visitors - California, New York, Florida and the big historic cities pull in a steady flow of Brits every year.

But there are 50 states in the Union - 23 of which are accessible by direct flights from the UK - and some don't get the attention they deserve. Well, maybe it's time to rectify that by heading to some of the harder-to-reach states. Here are our top picks.

## ▶ NEW MEXICO

**Highlights:** Strongly Hispanic and strongly Native American, New Mexico has a cultural twist to its natural highlights - which include the mountains and canyon carved by the Rio Grande in the north, and the dazzling dunescapes of the White Sands National Monument in the south.

Taos is home to the Taos

Pueblo, where the traditional way of living has been maintained for hundreds of years, and quirkily handsome capital Santa Fe is crammed with art galleries.

**Up-and-coming:** *Breaking Bad* turned the focus on Albuquerque, a classic Route 66 stop-off. But it's also home to the Sandia Peak Tramway, an audacious cable car heading to a 10,378-foot-high mountain station, and the Anderson-Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum.

This looks at hot-air ballooning in one of the sport's hotspots.

**Getting there:** American Airlines connections from Dallas and Phoenix are usually the quickest way to get to Albuquerque.

**Book it:** Collette runs a six-day New Mexico tour in October, based around the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. Prices start at £1,599.

[gocollette.com](http://gocollette.com)



**Dominated by national parks, Wyoming is arguably the west at its most beautiful**

## ▶ WYOMING

**Highlights:** Sparsely populated and dominated by national parks, Wyoming is arguably the west at its most beautiful. Yellowstone is the big draw here, and it's the variety that makes it special.

Grandstanding set-pieces such as Yellowstone Falls and the Old Faithful geyser come with plenty of backcountry hiking, plus splendid moose, bison and bear watching in the Lamar Valley.

**Up-and-coming:** Grand Teton

National Park to the south of Yellowstone is arguably even better for wildlife spotting, and comes with photogenic mountain views and river rafting. Just outside is the Jackson Hole ski resort - daunting for novices, but with excellent snow reliability.

**Getting there:** Delta flies to Salt Lake City, which isn't far from the southern part of Wyoming.

Otherwise, connect from Chicago or Denver with United to Jackson Hole airport.

**Book it:** Specialist operator Wildlife Worldwide offers a nature-themed holiday in Wyoming's National Parks, including a visit to the National Elk Refuge and wolf tracking in Yellowstone. Its seven-day Yellowstone Ultimate Wolf & Wildlife Safari winter trip costs from £4,895, excluding international flights.

[wildlifeworldwide.com](http://wildlifeworldwide.com) →





**KEY U.S. MARKETS  
TOP NAME BRANDS  
MILLIONS OF SHOPPERS**

**ARIZONA**

Scottsdale Fashion Square, Biltmore Fashion Park, Kierland Commons, La Encantada

**CALIFORNIA**

Santa Monica Place, Broadway Plaza, La Cumbre Plaza, Arden Fair

**COLORADO**

Twenty Ninth Street

**ILLINOIS**

The Shops at North Bridge, Fashion Outlets of Chicago

**NEW YORK**

Queens Center, Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls USA

**OREGON**

Washington Square

**PENNSYLVANIA**

Fashion District Philadelphia OPENING 2018

**WASHINGTON, DC**

Tysons Corner Center

MacerichTourism.com



**THE US SECOND-TIME STATES DESTINATIONS**



**LEFT:** Churchill Downs, Kentucky

**RIGHT:** Portsmouth, New Hampshire

**BOTTOM:** Denali National Park, Alaska



**▶ MONTANA**

**Highlights:** Montana is often tackled in conjunction with Wyoming – and the Beartooth Highway connecting the two states across the mountains is one of the most spectacular drives on Earth. The Going-to-the-Sun road across the Glacier National Park – all lakes, icebergs, glaciers and precipitous hiking trails – offers stiff competition.

**Up-and-coming:** Montana is cowboy country, and an outdoorsman's dream. Hiking, horse riding and fishing can be taken on just about anywhere. Flathead Lake offers cruises, kayaking and canoeing, and somewhat hippy-ish university town Bozeman is the highly enjoyable home of the Museum of the Rockies.

**Getting there:** Both Billings and Bozeman airports have connections to several cities, including Chicago, Dallas, Denver and Seattle.

**Book it:** Ranch holidays get straight to the heart of life in

Montana, and the Inspiring Travel Company offers a seven-night package with six nights' full-board at Rocking Z Ranch and a night on arrival in Helena, from £3,299 for travel in April or May 2019. The price includes United Airlines flights via Denver, all transfers and ranch activities. [inspiringtravelcompany.co.uk](http://inspiringtravelcompany.co.uk)

**▶ KENTUCKY**

**Highlights:** Horses, bluegrass and bourbon are Kentucky's calling cards. You'll find the former around Lexington, where the Kentucky Horse Park houses the International Museum of the Horse. Bluegrass is mountain music, and the newly renamed and relocated Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and the annual bluegrass festival in Owensboro, are the places to go for ad hoc jam sessions.

Bourbon distilleries, meanwhile, form a boozy trail around Bardstown and Frankfort.

**Up-and-coming:** Louisville may well be the most-underrated city

in the States. Attractions include the Muhammad Ali Center, the Kentucky Derby Museum and Churchill Downs, where America's biggest horse race takes place. **Getting there:** Delta connects to Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky international airport through Boston or Newark.

**Book it:** North America Travel Service offers a 15-day Bluegrass and Country self-drive, which spends five nights in Kentucky between Cincinnati and Atlanta. Prices start at £2,130 per person. [northamericatravelservice.co.uk](http://northamericatravelservice.co.uk)

**▶ ALASKA**

**Highlights:** A classic cruise destination, Alaska's coastline is a tundra wonderland of fjords and glaciers. These include the massive Hubbard Glacier, where whales, seals and otters swim, and icebergs float along the craggy coast. The urban settlements of Skagway, Juneau and Ketchikan are distinctive for gold rush history, the salmon industry and Native American

culture respectively. **Up-and-coming:** Inland adventures are increasingly on the menu, with wilderness lodges in and around Denali National Park providing bases for activities such as river floating, dog sledding, whitewater rafting and wildlife-spotting tours.

**Getting there:** Seattle and Vancouver are generally Alaska's connection hubs. Alaska Airlines runs plenty of flights from Seattle. **Book it:** Princess Cruises offers a 12-night Connoisseur holiday, with seven nights' cruising and a five-night land tour component, from £1,953. [princess.com](http://princess.com)

**▶ NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**Highlights:** The White Mountains – one of the most spectacular regions along the Appalachian Trail – are undoubtedly the stars of New Hampshire, which is often bundled into a New England self-drive trip rather than seen as a destination in its own right. The mountains are an outdoor



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→ heaven, but there are plenty of scenic drives too, with the Conway Scenic Railroad and the Mount Washington Observatory Weather Discovery Center catering for those not gleefully in hiking boots.

**Up-and-coming:** Portsmouth, on the coast, claims to be the third-oldest city in the US, but has gone young and hip in recent years. Steamship tours of the harbour are a good introduction.

**Getting there:** Boston Logan airport, which has several direct flights from the UK, acts as the major gateway to the whole New England region.

**Book it:** Grand American Adventures sells an eight-day Appalachian Trail In-Depth walking holiday, with six days of backcountry hikes, meals and naturalist talks in the White Mountains, starting at £1,402. [grandamericanadventures.com](http://grandamericanadventures.com)

## MAINE

**Highlights:** Maine's strengths lie on its coast, where handsome seaside towns such as Kennebunkport and gay-friendly Ogunquit get as many tourists as fishing boats. Portland has the Museum of Art, which pulls in plenty of top American artists, a huge variety of boat cruises and a plethora of brewpubs.

**Up-and-coming:** Acadia National



**Looming cliffs, deserted beaches, rock climbing and mountain bike trails provide the appeal**

**RIGHT:** Acadia National Park, Maine



Park in the north of the state offers decidedly unkitsch wilderness. Looming cliffs, deserted beaches, rock-climbing hotspots and mountain bike trails provide much of the appeal.

**Getting there:** Again, Boston is the major hub.

**Book it:** Tauck runs a 12-day Grand New England group tour, with four nights in Maine, including a private schooner cruise at Bar Harbor and a lobster boat experience in Portland, from £3,650. [tauck.co.uk](http://tauck.co.uk)

## DELAWARE

**Highlights:** The second-smallest state in the Union is best known for its tax-free shopping, which makes the Christiana Mall in

the north of Delaware and the Tanger Outlets nearer the coast very popular. Otherwise, the Brandywine Valley in the north is well known for its lavish gardens, and the Winterthur Estate houses a gigantic arts and antiques collection.

**Up-and-coming:** Rehoboth Beach – the closest beach to Washington DC – does a nice line in amusements, upscale dining and water sports alongside its mile-long boardwalk.

**Getting there:** BA flies direct to Philadelphia airport, just 22 miles away from northern Delaware city Wilmington, from Heathrow.

**Book it:** Viator sells several kayaking and stand-up paddleboard rentals and tours in Rehoboth Beach. [viator.com](http://viator.com)

## SOUTH CAROLINA

**Highlights:** Charleston is one of the grand old dames of the south, surrounded by gorgeous plantation homes. For sobering balance, the Old Slave Mart Museum tells the dark history of the people who worked on these plantations, while Aiken-Rhett House and Joseph Manigault House are two of the most attractive historical showpieces to visit.

**Up-and-coming:** Myrtle Beach is the major hub for sunbathing, amusement parks and slightly gaudy entertainment, while Hilton Head is more reserved and golf-centric.

**Getting there:** The western part of the state is a short drive from Atlanta, where Delta, Virgin Atlantic and BA fly direct.

**Book it:** Trafalgar's eight-day Tales of the Old South tour spends two nights in Savannah, two in Hilton Head, including a day at leisure, plus three nights in Charleston, from £2,395 with departures in September and October. [trafalgar.com](http://trafalgar.com)

## ALABAMA

**Highlights:** Selma, Montgomery and Birmingham all played huge parts in the civil rights struggle. Capital Montgomery, where Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat in 1955, is home to the Rosa Parks Museum and Civil Rights Memorial Center. The turning-point march in Selma's story is told at the National Voting Rights Museum.

**Up-and-coming:** Birmingham is the civil rights hotspot that offers more than just history. The Civil Rights Memorial Trail spreads over seven blocks. However, with plenty of students in the city there's a lively bar scene, especially in the Five Points area.

**Getting there:** Montgomery is around 150 miles' drive from Atlanta airport.

**Book it:** America As You Like It has a seven-day Alabama Civil Rights Trail self-drive trip, costing from £1,084.

[americaasyoulikeit.com](http://americaasyoulikeit.com)



**LEFT:** Civil Rights Memorial Center, Alabama